

To the Joint Committee on the Ways and Means:

My name is Rita Canales and I am a Yamhill County Master Gardener. I have been a Master Gardener in Oregon since 2015 and was a San Joaquin County Master Gardener in California from 2009-2015. At present I am the President Elect; I have been President and will be President next year. I have firsthand knowledge of the importance of the OSU Extension Offices.

As Master Gardeners we interact with our communities teaching the best scientific methods for gardening, helping make good decisions that can affect our whole community. We learn from the experts and have access to the experts when interacting with the public through the OSU Extension Office. People come in to ask questions and seek our help with their problems. We go out into the community to many of the events such as Farmer's Markets, Heritage Days, and multiple Festivals around the county. At these events we answer questions and give advice.

Here in Yamhill County the McMinnville Community Garden supplies literally tons of food to YCAP each year. The Master Gardeners are heavily involved in this growing and giving advice to help the increase the yield of the produce. Our Garden to Table classes instruct lower income families on the basics of growing their own vegetables. After the classes are completed they are supplied with containers to grow their own vegetables and access to the Master Food Preservers.

OSU Extension isn't just the Master Gardeners; it is Master Food Preservers, 4H Youth, Fire Program, Woodland Managers, Nutrition Education, Oregon Bee Atlas, Oregon Master Beekeepers, Oregon Master Naturalist, Oregon Season Tracker, Small Farms, Outdoor School, Rural Studies, and many other programs. Each of these programs requires volunteers to help spread the word and assist the experts.

Unfortunately over the last few years through attrition and lack of support the OSU Extension has been declining in the obligations it can meet in our communities. There are many trained volunteers in each of these programs ready to get out there and help their fellow Oregonians but we are in need of real leadership. So I am asking you today to please make sure that you are generous in funding the OSU Extension Services. Help your communities to grow stronger by learning to help one another, to educate one another and plan for our future.

Sincerely,

Rita Canales  
President Elect